MORTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Kyle L. Kirchmeier, Sheriff

News Release
For Immediate Release
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Contact: Morton County PIO (701) 426-1587 or (701) 595-3596

Drone Operator Attacks Helicopter Using Unmanned Aircraft

Mandan, N.D. – Authorities report two documented cases where an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) flew at a helicopter in a threatening manner. The helicopter was assisting in surveillance in the vicinity of Highway 1806 during an active protest situation Sunday morning. A sheriff on board the helicopter reported to law enforcement on the ground that the helicopter pilot and passengers were "in fear of their lives", and that the "drone came after us."

Around 11:00 a.m., the drone was flying directly above officers, in violation of FAA rules. Law enforcement used less-than-lethal ammunition to fire on and damage the UAS, which was then landed by the drone operator.

"The FAA has strict guidelines and regulations governing the use of drones around unprotected people and manned aircraft. The drones being operated near the local protests and the camps south of Mandan generally are not being operated within the regulations. Reports of drones not being operated within the FAA guidelines or in a reckless and unsafe manner are being investigated and forwarded to the Morton County States Attorney's office," said Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier.

Two drone operators have previously been charged for crimes involving illegal use of unmanned aircraft systems during the on-going protest situation. Myron Dewey was charged with stalking and Aaron Turgeon was charged with two counts of reckless endangerment, one being a C Felony for flying an UAS at a North Dakota Highway Patrol plane. Below is the FAA's Summary of "Small Unmanned Aircraft Rule":
https://www.faa.gov/uas/media/Part_107_Summary.pdf#page=1&zoom=auto,-127,571

Authorities are currently monitoring protest activity north of the camp, near Highway 1806. Due to the traffic hazard the public, highway 1806 has been closed due. As of this morning, 200 protesters and 8 horses had cut fence and entered private property east of 1806. This is private property that is a DAPL construction site. DAPL employees are working along the pipeline route today.

We will send an updated release as additional information comes available.

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